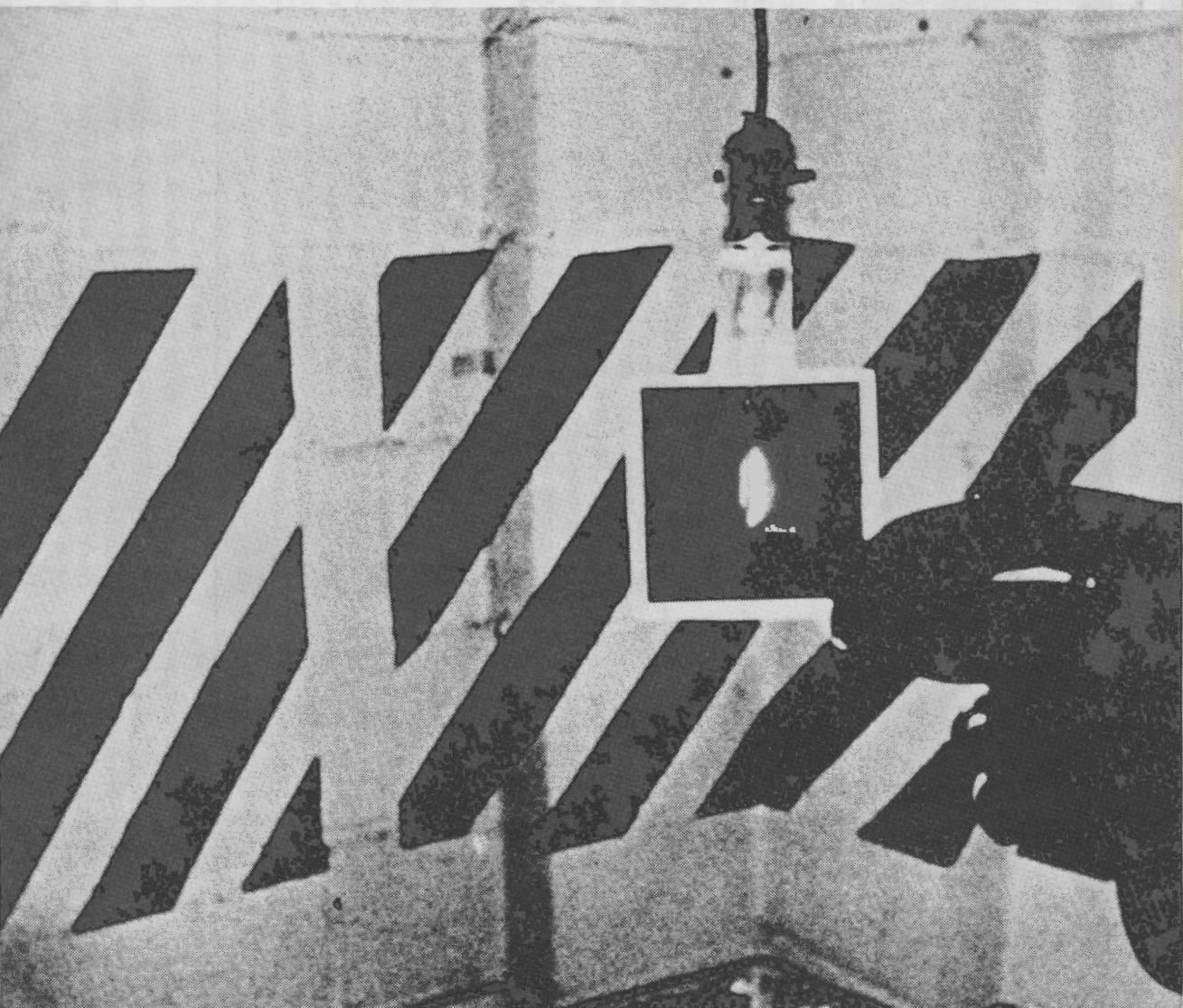


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INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Vol. IV, No. 1

Winter 1983



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INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Vol. IV, No. 1

Winter 1983

Southern Films To Circulate Internationally

Susan Leonard

Regionalism. The concept applied to independent film exhibition has recently been highlighted nationally through traveling film collections from New England, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and the San Francisco Bay area. The regionalist concept has now come into being at the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center in the form of a new film exhibition program called *New Films From The New South*.

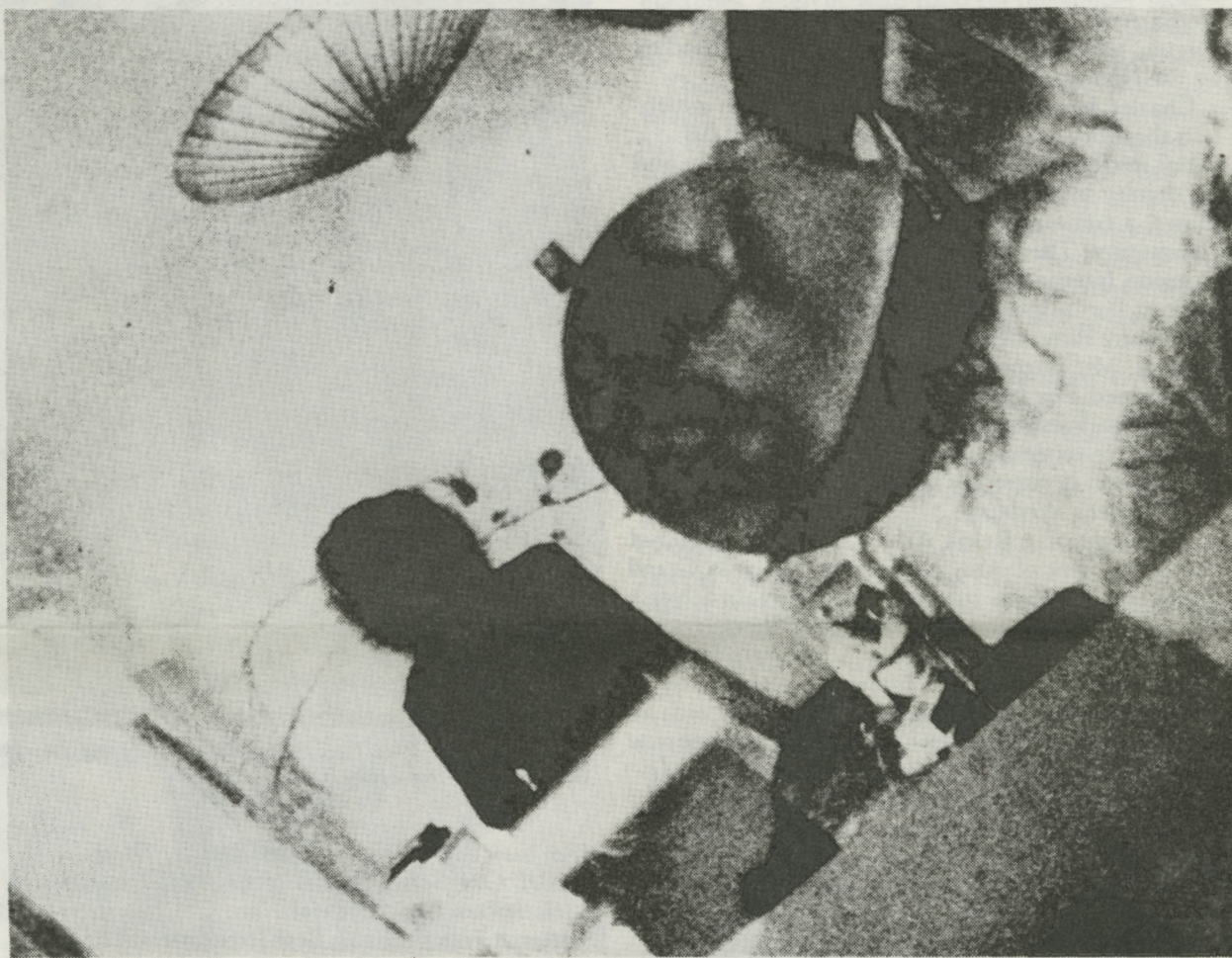
New Films From The New South is an ambitious program both in its distribution outreach and its attempt to represent the independent filmmaker living in the South and producing short, experimental film. The search for films to be included was an opportunity to expand further the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center's network interconnecting independents and to gain a renewed appreciation for the vitality of the region's film activity. *New Films From The New South* is an exemplary collection that expresses the rich diversity of the region but is only a sampling of the many innovative films currently being produced. Regional cohesiveness is an illusive claim given the geographic mobility of the artists, the varying influences, mentors they have encountered, and the personal development reflection each film represents. *New Films From The New South* is not identifiably Southern through its imagery or its ideas. It is, however, a current representation of the emphasis of seven Southern artists whose confrontation with ideas and film material transforms images and sounds into dynamic, untraditional forms.

The inspiration for this new collection came in spring 1982, when South Carolina animator Jan Millsapps, with assistance from the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center, programmed and presented *Travel Films From The Southern Avant-Garde* (see *Independent Spirit*, Spring 1982) to Collective For Living Cinema (New York), Real Art Ways (Hartford), University of Massachusetts (Amherst), Boston Film and Video Foundation (Boston), and Columbia Museums of Art and Science (Columbia). The program included *Dancing Lessons* by Nancy Yasecko (SC), *Mexican Jail Footage* by Gordon Ball (VA), *Small Foveal Fields* by Robert Russett (LA), *Mother* by Joan Strommer (VA), *Folly Beach Journal* by Jan Millsapps (SC), and *Tubas* by Lee Sokol (GA). The consensus of the Northeastern audiences was a high appraisal of the Southern works rarely available in those cities and requests to see more Southern independent films.

The tour's success was an enthusiastic preface to the recently completed permanent collection of short, experimental, Southern-made films by independents to be distributed nationally/internationally as well as within South Carolina.

LIGHT CORNER. W.A. Brown. Georgia. 1981. Color. Sound. 7m. The ordinary lightbulb is elevated to its dramatic design potential as scribe of fluid light/color; Brown as experimenter with vibrant, visual motion and slow motion sound; the camera as professor/observer.

L'ACADIE: AN ALBUM OF 16MM EKTACHROME SKETCHES. Robert Russett.



Pictured above is a frame from Florida filmmaker David Audet's *ENA*, part of SCACMAC's new film collection *NEW FILMS FROM THE NEW SOUTH*.

Louisiana. 1979. Color. Sound. 16m. An untraditional portrait of the French Acadiana region in Louisiana. Nine vignettes of pastoral and social impressions were photographed then rephotographed and structured against a formalized soundtrack of indigenous insects from the Acadiana country.

DANCING LESSONS. Nancy Yasecko. South Carolina. 1981. Color. Sound. 4m. A film crew's complementary recordings of their own activities while on assignment to film the space shuttle launch at Cape Canaveral. Yasecko has optically printed five sequences from the found footage; thereby transforming the playful scenarios into a gestural study. The tribal audiotrack is, in fact, the crew's rapping out a song from deep within their cultural roots, *The Theme From My Three Sons*.

ENA. David Audet. Florida. 1980. Color. Silent. 3m. Montage and superimposition sketch an elaborately textured portrait of a woman. The idea of *Ena* as perceived/conceived by Audet is a visual layering of her in transition on moving day. She is at ease in front of her friend's camera. The silent film is a poem to her.

FULL FRAME ONE. Tom Whiteside. North Carolina. 1980. B/W. Silent. 8m. A silent, hand-drawn film that elicits, through persistence of vision, the viewer's perception of colors and rhythms. Whiteside's inspiration has come more from musical than film forms. The concentrated, diagonal etched frames are like a focused sound

that is altered by each viewing.

AQUI SE LO HALLA. Lee Sokol. Georgia. 1982. Color. Sound. 18½m. Romantic illusion evoked through the bullfight, sleight-of-hand magic, and woman. A seductively formed film that combines elements of romance, deception, and ritual through the rhythms of color, close images, sound/silence, and the personal confession of desire as related by a Mexican man beginning his story as a boy of seven.

FOLLY BEACH JOURNAL. Jan Millsapps. South Carolina. 1982. Color. Sound. 10m. A filmmaker's journal entries combine live action and animated sequences to define and redefine her return visit to the sea. Millsapps' sketches are, at once, contemplative and whimsical as she portrays the internal/external nature of her exchange with the sea landscape.

TOTAL SCREENING TIME 66½m.

For further information regarding *New Films From The New South*, please contact Susan Leonard, South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201, 803/758-7942.

ABOUT THE COVER: In W.A. Brown's *LIGHT CORNER*, the ordinary lightbulb is elevated to its dramatic design potential as scribe of fluid light/color. *LIGHT CORNER* is included in *NEW FILMS FROM THE NEW SOUTH*.

Exhibition

SOUTHERN CIRCUIT RETURNS

The Southern Circuit regional tour of independent filmmakers returns to the South after a one-year hiatus. The announcement was made recently by Susan Leonard, Exhibitions Coordinator at the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center and project coordinator for the Circuit, following notification of approved funding by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* is a film which tells the story of a man who, in spite of all his social misfortunes, manages to keep his family and his dignity intact. *Killer of Sheep* is, among other things, a commentary on lifestyles in the Black community. The film won the Silver Prize at the Houston International Film Festival, the Critic's Prize at Berlin International Festival, and First Prize for feature film at the United States Film and Video Festival. Mr. Burnett's other films include *Several Friends* and *The Horse*, which won the Hauptpreis at the 25th Westdeutsche Kurzfilmatage Oberhausen. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1980 and is currently working on his latest film *My Brother's Wedding*.

Documentarian Ralph Arlyck's film *An Acquired Taste*, recipient of Ann Arbor Film Festival's Grand Prize, San Francisco International Festival's Silver Award, Santa Fe Film Festival's "Best Short Documentary," and Kenyon Film Festival's First Prize, is an intelligent and humorous account of what Mr. Arlyck has achieved (or not achieved) as a person and a filmmaker—"an incisive, affectionate look at the American obsession with success." Mr. Arlyck's other films include *Undelivered: No Such Country*, *Centers of Influence*, *Natural Habitat*, *Hyde Park*, and *Sean*. His other awards include the Grand Prize at Henri Langlois International Film Festival (Tours, France); Independent Expo; American Film Festival finalist; Yorkton (Canada) International Festival; MOMA screenings; and First Prize for Documentary at the Fourth Annual NSA Festival, Lincoln Center, NYC.

Michelle Citron is widely known as a filmmaker, film lecturer, and proponent of feminist film issues. Her 1978 film *Daughter Rite* is described as "a narrative fiction film about women in nuclear families and the grief, betrayal, anger, love and manipulation experienced by two sets of sisters in relation to each other and their respective mothers. The theme is explored through an inter-weaving of cinematic techniques—a traditional documentary-like form and a juxtaposition of optically printed home movie images and journal entries. The film was awarded a Golden Athena for Best Experimental Narrative at Athens International Film Festival (1979). Ms. Citron's other films include *Parthenogenesis*, *Integration*, *April 3, 1973*, *Self-Defense*, *Secretary Tapes*, *Birth Tape*, and *Claire Zeisler: Textile Artist*.

James Benning says, in an interview with Peter Lehman and Stephen Hand (*Wide Angle*), "It seems to me that narrative films, if I can speak in very general terms now, all look alike. They work with stories that have beginnings, middles, and ends where everything is neatly tied up for the audience. I'm not interested in that kind of story-telling. What I am interested in is developing a story that in some way becomes a kind of metaphor for what life is like. Not recreating reality, but allowing open spaces in the film where the audience itself can enter into the story with its own experiences." Mr. Benning's films include *Him and Me*, *Grand Opera*, *One Way Boogie Woogie*, *11 x 14*, *A to B*, *Chicago Loop*, *The United States of America*; his



James Benning: "What I am interested in is developing a story that in some way becomes a kind of metaphor for what life is like." Pictured above is a frame from *HIM AND ME*.

film installations include *Last Dance*, *Double Yodel*, *Oklahoma*, and *Four Oil Wells*. His awards include Best Experimental Film, Chicago International Film Festival; Best Experimental and Best of Festival, Athens International Film Festival; and Best Experimental Film, Baltimore Film Festival.

Award-winning Dutch animator, Co Hoedeman of The National Film Board of Canada, will present and discuss an evening of the most recent, innovative animation from Canada. Hoedeman's own animation demonstrates the combination of camera/set designs to ingeniously produce his appealing three-dimensional creatures made from sand (*The Sand Castle*), children's building blocks (*Tchou, Tchou*), and furry puppets (*The Owl And The Lemming*). Included in the program will be outstanding Canadian women's animation to include the following: Suzanne Gervais's beautifully hand-drawn animations of *Cycle*, a metamorphosis of line drawings reflecting man's position in the universe, and *Climates/Climats*, textural watercolor designs of the mind's atmosphere; Caroline Leaf's *The Metamorphosis Of Mr. Samsa*, Franz Kafka's famous story of a man who awakens to discover his transformation into a large, black bug; Caroline Leaf and Veronika Soul's *Interview*, a unique visual portrait of the filmmakers. The artists filmically sketch each other using their own individual animation techniques.

Willard Van Dyke, internationally-acclaimed photographer and social documentarian, founding director of the Museum of Modern Art's Film Department, will present and discuss his 1940 film *Valley Town*, a particularly relevant film today as a social statement regarding the American working class. *Valley Town* is remarkable in its formal structure that integrates the dramatic and documentary style by its use of the soliloquy and music against striking black and white

cinematography.

Van Dyke's life-long commitment to photography and film brings to the Southern Circuit an exceptional historical insight into the American independent documentary filmmaker. Other early works by Van Dyke include the classic social documentary *The City* (1939) which presents the effects and results of town planning on the people; *Northwest, USA* (1944) as a portrait of regional planning; and *The Photographer* (1948), a sensitive tribute to Van Dyke's mentor, photographer Edward Weston.

Peter Tiborsky, from Pannonia Film-studio in Hungary, will present a program of animated films from Poland and Hungary. Hungarian animation, though not widely shown in this country, has received highly favorable critical acclaim in Europe, and one of the Hungarian films to be shown, *The Bug*, won the Academy Award for best animation in 1981. Other Hungarian films will include *Gobble, Gobble* and *Fatal Compromise*. According to Charles Samu, Director of International Film Programs in Rahway, NJ, "Animation, in particular, affords us special insights into Polish society. The craft is well-respected and considered to be an important expression of national culture, as can be witnessed by the fact that there are five studios in Poland...annual production runs between 80 and 120 films." Polish animations scheduled to be included in this program include *Tango*, *Cages*, and *Banner*.

Larry Cuba is an animator who uses the computer as his tool to produce films that are extraordinary both aesthetically and technically. He will screen his newest film, which is currently not titled, and earlier works *Two Space* and *3/78*. Mr. Cuba, as educator for the process of computer animation, will also present segments from videotapes he has currently produced.

Reviews

Enough To Share -- A Story of Uncommon People

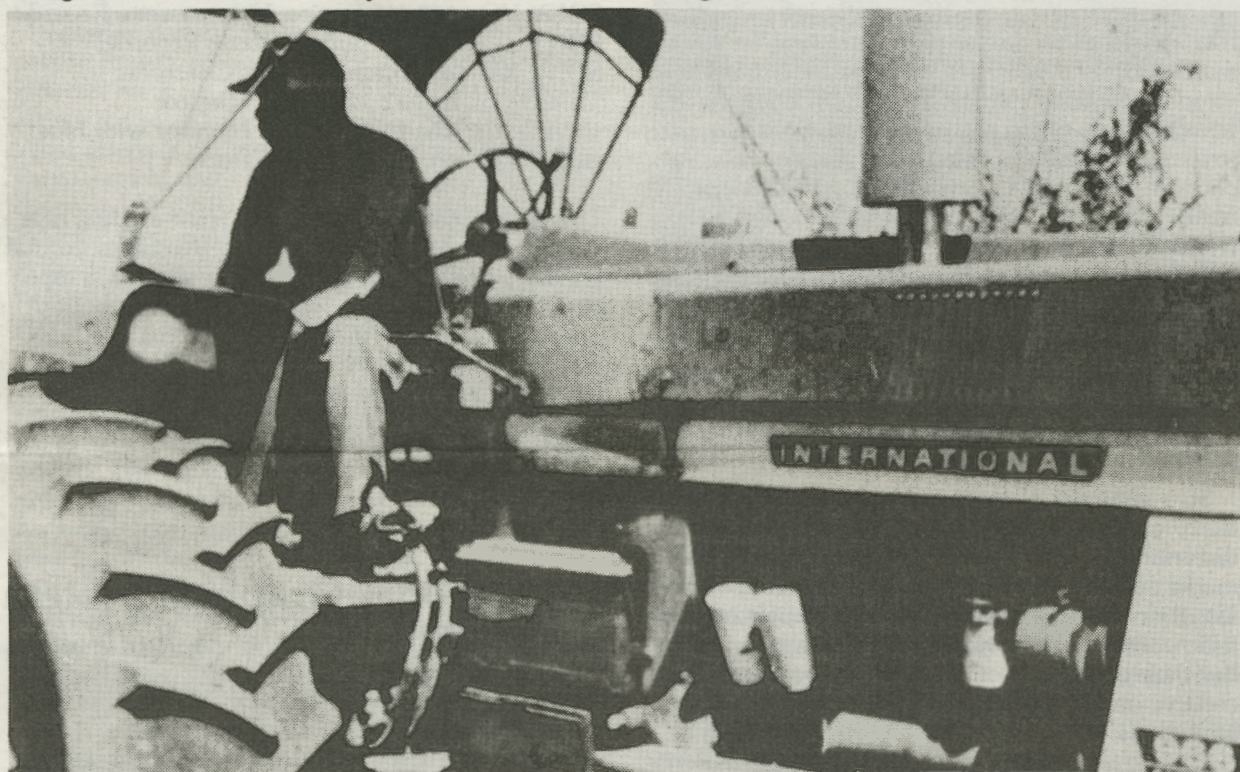
Bob Landau

Ever want to unhook, lose the umbilical nine to five and settle back down? Perhaps homesickness for a place you've never been keeps you up at night, tugs at your sleeve, reminds you to get some rest, and it's time to get up for work. Yes, work and rest, work and rest, and on the seventh day they rested; sound familiar?

"I wanted to do something with my life other than go to teach rich kids how to make more money," explains a recent newcomer to Koinonia Farm, a 150 member commune near Americus, Georgia, whose members' lifestyle is based on New

Testament concepts of sharing and nonviolence. Koinonia Farm is also the subject of *Enough to Share*, a documentary film by Gayla Jamison.

This is a story of uncommon people in a common setting, people who have decided to revert to first principles, to live only on what they themselves can grow, build, or nurture. "Service to the community within and without" is their motto. "The more we can save, the more we can share," says Mrs. Florence Jordan, wife of the founder. Simple ideas told in a simple fashion. There are no extravagant camera moves here, nor a reliance on slick editorial devices — just straight out story telling.



One of the residents of Koinonia Farm takes a break during a work day. The residents desire to live only on what they themselves can grow, build, or nurture. From *ENOUGH TO SHARE* by Atlanta filmmaker Gayla Jamison.



"I hope people get out of this that it is possible to be idealistic and make a dent in things like poverty and social inequality," says filmmaker Gayla Jamison. Pictured above is a frame from her recent film *ENOUGH TO SHARE*.

"I hope people get out of this that it is possible to be idealistic and make a dent in things like poverty and social inequality," states the filmmaker. Ms. Jamison makes a strong case, including us in the daily activities of the farm, both physical and spiritual. We see expansive fields of strong crops criss-crossed by the long tented irrigation machines, intercut with food on the supper table and a prayer offering during the meal, — this one for the sick mother of one of the farm's "partners."

There is an integration of design here, not just of images woven together to replicate an environment but of ideas — the ideas of a collective of people who make little distinction between earth consciousness and God consciousness, between private and public ownership of goods, and between black and white people. It is the lack of these distinctions which causes Koinonia farmers to fall into disfavor with the surrounding community and gives the film its dramatic power.

Through the use of historical footage shot by the farm's founder, Dr. Clarence Jordan, in 1942, we see the arid Georgia clay broken by black men plowing mules, later joined by white men and women with hammer and nails building a self-sufficient community out of the dust of south Georgia. A montage of respectable homes cross cut against the shanty town shacks familiar to any tourist in the agricultural South, while we're being told why all this works. "I used to think of white people as just my landlords," says one woman. "I was a civil rights worker but building low cost housing is a far more tangible way to help people," states another Koinonia "partner." Gayla Jamison: "They may not change the world...but they've built over a hundred houses which means that over one hundred families that lived in drafty shacks are now in nice houses." Soon we're flipping through a scrap book of newspaper clippings, headlines from the fifties, the all too familiar Ku Klux Klan bombings, beatings, and shootings, these of Koinonia members. "...today the community has accepted them," continues Jamison, "but there will always be people who reject them, just as there are still members of the Ku Klux Klan." Dr. Jordan's disembodied voice speaks to us from a crude recording made in the 1960's, a few years before his death. Over visuals of the agricultural achievement of the farm, he reminisces: "How could we let these people chase us from our land, this land we nurtured into life from dust? Selling out would be tantamount to selling our mother."

Once again the spiritual and physical merge as sound and picture strive to embody not just the lifestyle of a few hundred people sharing a parcel of land but of a basic tenet of a belief and perhaps the lost vision of our own Judeo-Christian heritage.

So why is this an important film? Well it just might be a more telling indicator of our society that stories such as this one do not, as a rule, make it to the nightly news. One is more likely to get the true scoop on Christian communal living from a network prefab movie entitled something like *Guyana: an American Nightmare* or *Why Can't Suzy Run Home*. What Gayla Jamison has done here is give us a non-judgmental rendering of a different version of the American dream, simply told through interviews and footage of farm members at work and play. Though this is not without its faults — one wishes to hear the views of the townsfolk about their unconventional neighbors, and their impact on the community — even so this is still a solid piece of filmmaking. These people tell their own story, till their own earth, and reach out to share what they, in harmony with their surroundings, have created from the mother earth.

Production

MAC Adds Video Editing and Computer Graphics

Michael Fleishman

Gordon Ball's thoughts in the *Independent Spirit* on technical sincerity have recently taken on a prophetic ring. For a number of months, SCAC-MAC has worked to establish a regional video editing studio. Horizontal blanking, blue gun, and NTSC are the guts of the electronic artist's palette, pigment, and color theory. Committed for years to providing the best artistic tools for filmmakers, the Center entered the shadow of Silicon Valley in April '82 with the purchase of our JVC KY-2700 portable color video production system. After the initial disorientation of being cast adrift with no sprocket hole in sight, fields and frames soon acquired their proper video perspective. This system has proven itself a highly versatile, powerful tool for image artists in the Southeast, and has been utilized for numerous independent projects. Selection of this equipment provided the necessary basic training phase for longer forays into the electronic jungle.

Being accustomed to the shifting climate of the Federal funding picture yields some understanding of the mercurial nature of an electronic shopping list. With magical new products, systems, and circuits developing weekly, separating the desire for unadulterated acquisition from the need to provide innovative artist tools is not such an easy task.

After a great deal of research on editing equipment during which several new products popped up, we decided on Sony's versatile front-loading VO-5850 3/4" editing system. Teamed with a Sony RM-440 automatic edit controller and two Videotek monitors, the system gives the Center a high quality creative editing facility. (It was at this point that I realized the span of time between product idea and product release must be shrinking at an exponential rate.)

Looking at low-cost character generators stimulated our interest in the possibility of interfacing (sorry) a personal computer with a videotape system for titling applications. While small computers output a video signal (albeit a much maligned one), few computer outlets or video equipment dealers professed much knowledge of this area. Yes, it was possible, but a "user-friendly identifiable configuration" proved elusive. Research in this area was mysterious, but fun. Like a kid unleashed in FAO Schwartz for the first time, I tore through piles of computer magazines and fold-out brochures, drooling over each amazing new piece of software and hardware shown in the colorful high-tech ads.

Some weeks later....we located a system based on an Apple II Plus computer that seemed to have the best of several worlds rolled into one. It would do titles in multiple font styles, had 4096 colors, provided super resolution (512 horizontal x 480 vertical lines), cut a true video key to insert titles into video with no switcher, and provided a standard NTSC (Never Twice the Same Color) video signal! And there was more. The PGS III (Professional Graphics System by Symtec, Inc.) could be accessed by an Apple Graphics Tablet so that artists can "paint" and draw onto videotape! Software included all our special color and graphics programs so that artists can easily create high resolution graphics.

One of the most interesting features of this powerful graphics "tool kit" was its price. The entire system, including the Apple II Plus computer

and support equipment, cost about 1/3 that of a high quality character generator and provided many more artistic possibilities. Time and artist creativity will, of course, determine its ultimate value, but the promise for creative experimentation is most exciting.

Computers mean new languages and concepts, as well as new hardware. As media image and information become more universally interrelated, artists as well as the larger public are faced with multi-channeled promises, never-leave-home environments, and building meaningful relationships with products of microchip technology while residing in residences filled with mechanical appliances. In an age of satellite/cable/video disc freneticism, how many film or video artists have working television sets?

The line between understanding these new tools and concepts and total absorption by their gleaming shininess is more subtly crossed than one might imagine. The Center's entrance into this new realm signals a need for an implicit awareness of a context for this electronic palette, so that it remains palatable to the artists who will use it.

So a reminder of technical sincerity is most germane at this juncture. For while grain, color shifts, discontinuity, and graphic distortion receive low marks on the broadcast engineer's standard checklist, their controlled use is often an important artistic parameter in a visual or media artist's work. But their control requires excellent tools and a creative understanding of their capabilities and limitations.

Technical sincerity, room for artistic experimentation, and a dynamic artist "tool kit" make for some exciting possibilities. If in the near future your call to the Center is answered by a computer synthesized Southern accent, we'll just be down the hall checking on works-in-progress, not playing computer space games. This, of course, bears no relationship to our necessity to have all computer game software approved by our State Purchasing Office. Trust us.

The South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center announces the opening of our Video Editing Studio and Professional Graphics System in January, 1983. Created to meet the expanding needs of the Southeast region's image artists and funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the facility is available to regional independent media artists who meet the following criteria:

1. Working on an original work that has been conceived solely by the artist;
2. not working on a hired or contract film or tape and is independent of corporate or commercial influences;
3. using his/her own money, grants money, or other funds that are free of any artistic restrictions. Reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and should be made at least two weeks in advance. The Center will work with artists having conflicting requests to try to accommodate specific needs. For more specific information about our editing or graphics system or reservations, please contact Michael Fleishman, South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 758-7942.

Video Editing Studio

\$50/day

Designed for affordable access to a creative editing system, the studio offers 24-hour access, a sleeping facility, as well as a kitchen and shower, and features the following:

SONY VO-5850 3/4" Editing Videocassette Recorder
SONY VO-5800 3/4" Videocassette Recorder
SONY RM-440 Automatic Edit Controller
VIDEOTEK RM-12 12" Color Monitor
VIDEOTEK RM-12 12" Color Monitor with blue gun, underscan, cross-pulse features

The Studio features Sony's new front-loading tape system: tape search from 1/30 to five times normal playback speed (high-speed search with KCS tape); plus 2 frames accuracy with one preview; built-in pre-roll capability; full range of automatic editing features. One Videotek monitor includes features for additional picture and signal analysis. A dub mode is provided for duplication of tapes which maintains an excellent signal-to-noise ratio.

Professional Graphics System (PGS-III)

\$10/hr

Using an Apple II Plus computer system, PGS-III generates a NTSC, broadcast-quality signal of 512 horizontal x 480 vertical line resolution with 4096 available colors, PGS-III cuts a true video key for insertion of text on graphics over videotape, or live camera feed.

This exciting system provides two major applications:

1. Character generation for video tapes
 2. Generation and recording of high-resolution color graphics
- By completely redefining Apple resolution, high quality characters generated by the Apple can be overlaid on tape. Six font styles with drop shadow are available and can be easily colorized. Text can be made to roll smoothly in two speeds, crawl horizontally, center and justify. A color background generator can be used to highlight text, font styles may be mixed, and text spacing edited by line and page. Additional fonts may be created with software provided.
3. An Apple Graphics Tablet--a sort of electronic sketch pad-- allows artists to draw freehand graphics which may be stored or transferred to tape. A number of special software programs allow creation of colors and shapes as directed by an artist using the graphics tablet. Colors may be redefined, point by point, or can fill irregular shapes. Individual shapes created may be "picked up" with the graphics tablet pen and used to "paint" areas of the screen. A "real-time" animation program allows movement through a redefinition of individual screen points. Since one available color is transparent, video images may also be matted into graphic designs.

PAUL GLABICKI: FORMALISM AS A WAY OF LIFE

Jan Millsapps

I have weird dreams sometimes.

Dreams about life and art.

Last night I dreamed Paul Glabicki was presenting an animation lecture in a church sanctuary. Most of the audience was already seated and Paul was standing decorously behind the pulpit. I stood at the back. Suddenly Paul jumped up on top of the pulpit and began dancing, shouting and waving his arms. People got out of their seats and hurried forward to be saved.

(Saved for animation? Saved from animation?)

Then I realized I was crying, presumably because I was moved, but later, after the service, when someone asked me what I thought of Paul's presentation, I realized instead I was crying because I thought he had put on an act, and I replied, "It was insincere."

Sincerity comes high on the list of qualities I expect to find in art and artists I like; the art which interests me most is that which intersects with the artist's life so as to engage me in a personal way. What interests me most about Pittsburgh animator Paul Glabicki and his work is how the two are connected. Both Paul and his films are immediately likeable; their connection, however, is not at first evident, and must be searched for. The dream is a part of my search—initially frustrating; later, a positive and satisfying experience.

Certainly the animation lectures Paul gave recently at the South Carolina Arts Commission reached nothing like my dream's emotional intensity; that would have been insincere for Glabicki and the cool formalism evident in his films and drawings. But there is a kind of feverish activity here—triangles, angles and gridwork layered and teeming off the paper, intersecting, flickering and vibrating on the screen, hints at realism, hints at Glabicki and his creative processes, but all being honed entropically toward some ultimate formal configuration, which at times seems to obscure, if not obliterate, the personal and emotional content.

This is the problem I've always had with formalists; it's not, as I told Paul, that they mean to be obtuse; it's rather that they can't help it. It's a difficult challenge to reveal life with a working vocabulary of lines, angles, shapes and textures. Moreover, any personal expression can be embedded so that it either goes unrecognized, or, if recognized, it may still be undecipherable. It seems like a giant tease.

Though he admits his work conceals much personal and "potentially embarrassing" information about himself, Glabicki says his formalist approach is not designed to be obtuse, but to clarify. The hints toward meaning he provides us are not teasing, but revelatory. We must just remember that what Glabicki shows us, and the ways he shows it, are the ways he sees reality; his work, then, is personal in that it expresses his own way of seeing and thinking in his own visual terms. His personal artistic obsession, evident in all his films and drawings, is with observing and expressing the formal in everyday life.

"Each color and each texture," he explains, "adds more and more information, until it becomes too confusing for me to sort out what all those things mean."

It's almost as if he has no choice; he must reduce the real into the formal in order to make use of it. It is the process of doing so which interests him most.

Unlike the bare-boned minimalists, Glabicki presents images and sounds which are rich and varied, incorporating into his work all the processes from inception to the final product, the "bridge," as he calls it. The images are layered to produce a kind of timelessness and nonlinear simultaneity, so that we see not only the formal in-



"The thing I like best about the triangle," says (Paul) Glabicki, "is that it is full of contradictions." Glabicki recently conducted an animation workshop at SCACMAC.

formation—the end product, but at the same time where it came from, and how it was redefined in successive stages, along with other mental and emotional associations, like sidetraps. The viewer's confusion comes in sorting through the layers, working backwards to find the starting point, then forward again for full understanding.

Glabicki's "Diagram Film" makes this assimilation process easier than his other work. This film, in fact, may be viewed as a primer for introducing us to Glabicki's formalizing process. The theme is observing and expressing everyday reality—lawn sculpture, billboards, airplanes, birthday cakes, etc.—in formal configurations. In this film the artist is kind; he guides us logically from the representational image first, then to a formalized design, and finally into the lines, shapes and textures as they change, taking on their own meanings as they reassemble themselves in different designs. The artist wants us to follow the transformations he has seen and expressed, to be amazed at what has amazed him, to laugh at his jokes, to appreciate his subtle wit, to admire his artist's compositional eye.

For instance, an arced line follows the movement of a man opening a large book in the film's first scene. We see the book open, then the curved line as a formal redefinition of the action. There is more here than formal information, however; the introductory scene represents Glabicki's opening his own book for us, of wanting to be clear and understood about himself and his work. And there is still more: the scene is borrowed from Hitchcock's *Dial 'M' for Murder*, and happens in that film as the murderer's identity is about to be revealed. As it is reworked into Glabicki's film, the scene becomes a filmic statement on answering questions and solving mysteries.

The scenes that follow all comment on finding and expressing the formal patterns inherent in all objects and situations. Airplanes, a continuing passion for Glabicki, figure prominently in the film. We see an airplane close-up, zipping through the frame. In mid-pass the live-action image

becomes a stylized black-and-white drawing, then an arrow moving in the same direction. There are puns of "plane" and "plain" mixed in as well.

Other scenes rework reality in similar and often comic ways. From a huge birthday cake sitting on top of a car Glabicki "found" one day parked on a Pittsburgh street comes a diagrammatic expression in which the elements, circles for wheels and horizontals for the car body, all float and move into totally new configurations, becoming a radically changed composition, though the elements are the same. Glabicki does the same with angles from Eisenstein's *Odessa Steps* sequence and with triangles from a postcard of Indian teepees. The film's final scene pictures symmetrical fake swans, as lawn ornaments, whose graceful curves realign themselves and to which Glabicki adds word associations such as "swan dive," "swan song," and "Swanee, how I love ya."

No matter how reductive the elements become (and they always are reduced to high-contrast black and white), there is a *raison d'être*. What is probably the film's most reduced element, a small parallelogram zipping across the screen at the film's very beginning, represents the "dynamic" film frame rushing ahead of itself, which is the static film frame and its contents, which is the film itself.

Glabicki's work since *Diagram Film* seems less straight-forward. Recent drawings are thickly populated with some representational elements, like ladders, and some familiar elements, like triangles and arrows, but there are fewer hints toward understanding. Still, we must trust Glabicki's statement that he is working as he is seeing and thinking, a process he stresses as both intuitive and personal.

He works spontaneously, starting, he says, "anywhere," and changing his approach whenever it becomes too "fixed," by adding new elements, by turning the drawing upside down, or by leaving it to begin another. His subject matter is often found and developed in a correspondingly unplanned way. Only after an image appears over and over—for instance, airplanes and their formal designation, arrows—does Glabicki accept it as a personal symbol and consciously begin to repeat it. The ladders are recent recurring elements, taking the artist and the audience from one "level" of understanding to another, along with a half-calligraphy, half-design which represents for Glabicki both the content and form of "writing" across time and space.

The triangles which reappear in Glabicki's work have evolved into a personal symbol for Glabicki himself. It's a shape, according to the artist, with "a personality."

"The thing I like best about the triangle," says Glabicki, "is that it is full of contradictions. It can be calm and stable when it's at rest, yet it has all this tension and potential activity, plus it has a lot of symbolic associations."

Glabicki's triangles recall the trinity from his religious background, his hometown, Pittsburgh, which is famous for its "golden triangle," and his bank's logo. In a drawing he did for his thirtieth birthday, a triangle lies on its side despondently, amid birthday greetings and celebratory activities with friends. A scene at the end of his film-in-progress, *Film/Wipe/Film*, features a dense arrangement of formal elements all fighting for dominance, within which a tiny triangle embedded in a chair explodes. This is the artist's emotional comment on being involved in what he tells people over and over is "insanity."

"Formalism is a very emotional way of perceiving things," he explains, "because it is obsessive." His energies go into reducing the real world into the formal one not as some dry

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Comments

Works In Progress

Steve Lewis

Keeping up with activity in a region as large as the one we serve is certainly a challenge, and it is a challenge that we enjoy trying to meet. So when artists and booking organizations respond as well and as positively as many of you have recently, we are not only assisted in our efforts but gratified by the results.

We certainly hope that the kind of exposure (however brief) given to artists and their work in this section of the *Independent Spirit* will serve not only as an information network to one another but also to increase the exposure of the work currently being done by film and video artists in the Southeast.

Thanks to all the people who regularly send us information about projects in the works as well as projects recently or about-to-be released. We want to encourage anyone to send us information about your work as it becomes available. One of the purposes of *Independent Spirit* is to encourage and promote the works of artists in this region and to make an effort to see that people in other regions of the country become better informed about the work which is being done in independent film and video in the Southeast. Your help in providing us with information and suggestions is always welcome.

KAREN SNYDER (New Orleans, LA) Karen recently finished a videotape entitled *View From The Stoop*, a one-half hour documentary about "stoopsitting," a New Orleans tradition. "I have a pretty decent quality rough cut now," says Karen. "I'll be going to a TV station to do a better edit." When the editing and transferring is finished, *View From The Stoop* will be available in 3/4" and 1 inch format. The tape was shot in old New Orleans neighborhoods, sections where most of the houses are "shotguns" with stoops on the front. In these neighborhoods stoopsitting is still very much alive, and it is these people who tell what stoopsitting is and how it came about. The tape is structured in three parts: the first section features current stoopsitters telling why they like to "sit." The second section is primarily one of memories, with Creole people recounting their recollections of a time when everyone stoopsat, a time when the streets were filled with neighbors, vendors, and bands playing. The last section of the tape features a well-to-do citizen who lives in the French Quarter. He lives with his family in a beautiful home separated from the street by a garden wall. He has everything, but he is unhappy. Why? Because he has no stoop to sit on. So for Christmas his wife gave him a portable stoop (that's right). So he can take his portable stoop out to the sidewalk, set it up by his garden wall, and stoopsit. People come by and sit with him, maybe have a drink, or just engage in one of the best Southern pastimes, "passing the time of day." *View from the Stoop* received funding from the Louisiana Commission for the Humanities and the Alabama Filmmakers' Co-op. Contact Karen Snyder, c/o New Orleans Video Access Center, 2010 Magazine St., New Orleans, LA 70130.

BILL TURNER (Mebane, NC) "I'm working on an animated film. It's in the very early stage—I'm still trying to get money for it. It's a survey of nineteenth century architectural styles." Bill says that the film will be "kind of" educational. Visually the film will encompass constantly changing images of a house—entitled *Georgian and Gingerbread*. "It's all drawings—cel animation. It's in color. You almost have to work in color these days, because

that's one of the first things TV looks for. They don't like black and white. And TV...you have to keep them in mind."

JOE WIDER (Columbia, SC) "We're calling it the South Carolina Political History Project, a very up-front approach to trying to raise money in South Carolina. We've been working on the show for about four years, including my field work as a political observer. We started shooting in 1980. We're trying to establish a tie between culture and politics—how popular culture shapes politics, particularly in the South." The original idea for the show was on political etiquette, featuring William Jennings Bryan Dorn, but now they are using Dorn as a transitional element from South Carolina's political past to its political present, from one-party to two-party politics. "We're hoping for three to four one-hour shows depicting SC politics from reconstruction to the present. We're not really looking for accuracy, we're looking for the sentiment—to give people an idea of why things turned out the way they did. That (sentiment) is Southern. We're interested in how people perceive history." This idea places sentiment above historical accuracy, according to Wider, and gives the viewer the sentiments seen from a number of perspectives/ based on who these people are and where they were politically at the time. Wider and Mark Spagnolo have also designed a unique computer editing system for this project which will enable them to call up not only information contained on the footage in any one of several different categories but will also enable them to recall any and all notes which were made at the time of the original viewing. All footage is shot in video.

FRAN MCLAUGHLIN (St. Petersburg, FL) Recently finished *Rocky Racoon*, a pantomime film based on the Beatles' song (sung by Florida musician St. Pete Twigg). Fran is also doing in-house video production for International Video Services.

NANCY CERVENKA (St. Petersburg, FL) "I am currently working on *Memories of the Vinoy*, which I hope to finish soon. When finished, the film will be a 15 to 20 minute film which recalls the by-gone majesty of the Vinoy Park Hotel. Once a beautiful vacation spot located on the bay in St. Petersburg, it now sits unoccupied and rundown, yet still showing traces of the beauty it once claimed. I was inspired to make this film after knowing of a woman who, while dying in a hospital, thought she was staying in the Vinoy. She drifted from room to room, visiting her fellow residents. Some vivid memories never leave us, they will never decay." The film is currently in post-production.

MARTY VERMILLION and MICHAEL FERGUSON (Mt. Pleasant, SC) Marty and Michael just recently finished a Dance Trilogy videotape. The tape is composed of three separate video dances. Each piece explores a different and cumulative approach to the documentation of a dance piece onto the videotape. In *Studiomotion* (1980) as the camera moves freely around and through the motions of the dance, a *pas de deux* between the screen and dancer evolves. *Imaging* (1981) is an impressionistic dance piece in which the video is electronically improvised around the motion itself. The dance loses its ability to be recreated "live," as it becomes an intrinsically videopiece. In *Happy Feet* (1982) movement is choreographed for spurts. The videotape then makes a visual college of the

motions, with the camera recording the motion and the videotape reinterpreting it. *A pas de trois* relationship evolves. The dominant member of this threesome changes perpetually. The tape is available from Apogee Videofilms, Apartment S-7, 1061 Highway 17 By-pass, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464.

NANCY YASECKO (Cayce, SC) Nancy's post production work continues on *Growing Up With Missiles* (60 minutes, color, sound), a long-term work-in-progress now nearing completion. Says Nancy, "It consists of personal recollections of my childhood in Cocoa Beach, Florida, in the context of the development of the nearby space program. Images of local activity are seen from a multiple perspective - through NASA documentation, television and news coverage, U.S. Air Force material, home movies and snapshots, and my current documentary footage. This assemblage covers the first rocket launched at the cape in 1950 (a captured German V-2), to the first Space Shuttle launch in 1981. It describes my childhood awareness of the rockets surrounding us and the marker events in space exploration by which we on the space coast measured our lives. It's also humorous."

Nancy plans to have all the creative work finished by January, then she will begin raising money to pay for post-production costs, so release date is still uncertain.

LOUIS ALVAREZ and ANDREW KOLKER (New Orleans, LA) "We are in final stages of a rough cut for a show called *Mosquitoes and High Water*, a documentary about Islenos, a Spanish-speaking group of fishermen living near New Orleans." Louis and Andrew are also about to begin production on *Yeah, You Rite*, a video piece about the way people talk in New Orleans. (Also see *The Ends of the Earth: Plaquemines Parrish, Louisiana* - reviewed in next issue.) Contact Center for New American Media, P.O. Box 53163, New Orleans, LA, 70153 (504) 529-2929.

TOM AND MIMI DAVENPORT (Delaplane, VA) Tom and Mimi are currently working on a series, *From The Brothers Grimm: American Versions Of Folktale Classics*, which includes seven live-action adaptations of important folk-fairy tales and one "in-service" unit for teachers. PBS will feature the series as both instructional and family entertainment. Support for the project came from CPB as well as the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation. All of the films will have an American historical setting and will be shot on location in the Virginia countryside.

P.S. We were going to run a photograph of myself washing my hands of the INDEPENDENT SPIRIT -- a valiant attempt to bring humor to the printed page -- but, alas, there was no space. This will be my last issue as editor of INDEPENDENT SPIRIT, since I have accepted a new position as Literary Arts Coordinator in SCAC's Arts Development Division. Certainly I have enjoyed my tenure as editor and will miss the personal contact I've had with so many media artists in the Southeast. I leave the SPIRIT in Susan Leonard's very capable hands and say thank you to all who have made the job such a pleasure.

CORRECTION

In the last edition of *Independent Spirit*, we erroneously listed Tom Whiteside's address as Monroe, NC. The real address is P.O. Box 292, Moncure, NC 27559.

Co-op Grants Announced

The Alabama Filmmakers' Co-op has announced its most recent grantees for independent film and video projects in the Southeast. Sixty-four proposals were submitted for the October 1, 1982 deadline. Twelve of the projects were selected to be funded. The grants were smaller than usual and ranged from \$600 to \$1700. The total amount funded was \$12,200.

Grantees

LEE ABER (Ruston, LA) \$1700—to support a video documentary, *Turtle Trapping in Louisiana: A Disappearing Heritage*. The video tape will explore the lifestyles of turtle trappers whose livelihood is as threatened as the snapping turtle they hunt.

ELVA E. BISHOP (Carrboro, NC) \$600—to support a video documentary, *History of Women's Basketball*, which presents the past and present game as well as unknown stars.

PHIL JONES (Atlanta, GA) \$700—to support a 10 minute documentary film. *Talledega* will use original video material along with film animation.

MEL KISER ((Miami, FL) \$900—to support five video documentaries. *Short Subjects* will concern the uncertain future of Miami's unique historical

and ecological heritage.

VIBEKE SORENSEN (Richmond, VA) \$700—to support an experimental animated film/video, *Hybrid Visual Music*, which will use computer-generated graphics, video special effects, electronic music and live-action dance.

JOAN STROMMER (Richmond, VA) \$700—to support a color, experimental 16mm film. *Utterances* will record the instant of making sound and the gesture of reaching outward to express the beauty, unity, and complexity of sound.

ELLEN L. SUMTER (Atlanta, GA) \$1300—to support a 16mm B&W experimental dramatic film, *Rags and Ole Love*, which depicts the lives of two black women—one living in a Southern urban environment and the other living in a Southern rural community—and concentrating on the similarities of their problems.

JIM MCLEAN (Chamblee, GA) \$700—to support a 16mm animated film. In *Motor Cycles* strange machines are synchronized with synthetic motor sounds.

LUCY MASSIE PHENIX (New Market, TN) \$1400—to support a one-hour 16mm color documentary film on the process of empowerment. *The Highlander Film Project* will focus on the

change in people's perceptions of themselves from powerless to the ability to influence their lives. The film is structured around people who have attended workshops at the Highlander Research and Educational Center in New Market, TN.

CHARLES RECHER (Ft. Lauderdale, FL) \$1200—to support a 16mm color experimental film, *Florida Film*, which explores the stereotyped visual ideas of Florida.

ROBERT RUSSETT (Lafayette, LA) \$1600—to support a 16mm live-action experimental film, *Les Secrets De La Famille*, which uses ordinary sequences of events to investigate the expressive and cinematic potential of French Acadiana imagery.

LEE SOKOL (Atlanta, GA) \$700—to support a 16mm documentary film. *Instant Ventriloquism* will develop the history of the relationship between a ventriloquist figure and the ventriloquist.

Selection panelists for this grant period were Louis John Hock, film and video artist/lecturer at University of California in San Diego; Nan Robinson, independent filmmaker, former Director of the South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center; and R. Stanley Woodward, independent filmmaker and media consultant, currently Media Director at the Virginia Museum.

Glabicki

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analytical exercise, but, he says, because he is inwardly driven to channel his perceptions in that direction in order to discover his process, in many ways still mysterious to him. We can expect that as Glabicki discovers the answers, we will, too, via his films and drawings. Like mirrors on all four walls, his work reflects his work, which reflects his work, and so on.

Glabicki's artistic zeal over his process reiterates what other formalist animators have said over the years. The earliest, Victor Eggling and Hans Richter, both, like Glabicki, painters first, became film makers around 1920 not because they planned to, but, according to Richter, because they had to. Making films was the only way to follow their growing interest in expressing their forms dynamically, i.e. through motion. And like Glabicki, their work became an obsession which infiltrated other aspects of their lives. Richter described his colleague Eggling thusly:

"His incisive mind, his intense personality, his whole heart and soul—all were dedicated to the furtherance of his ideas, even in his choice of food. For instance, he refused to have eggs and milk at the same meal on the grounds, expressed in the same terms as he used for his 'linear orchestrations, that 'eggs and milk are too analogous'" (from *Experimental Animation*, Russett and Starr, 1976, p. 45).

Glabicki's world, similarly, was once upset during a beach trip because he was not accustomed to experiencing the long horizontals of the beachscape. Now he says he is considering a change to a totally new environment as a deliberate way of upsetting his visual comfort and introducing new aspects into his art. Outer space, perhaps.

While formalists like Eggling and Richter have been obsessive about their life and work since early times, it is more recently that independent

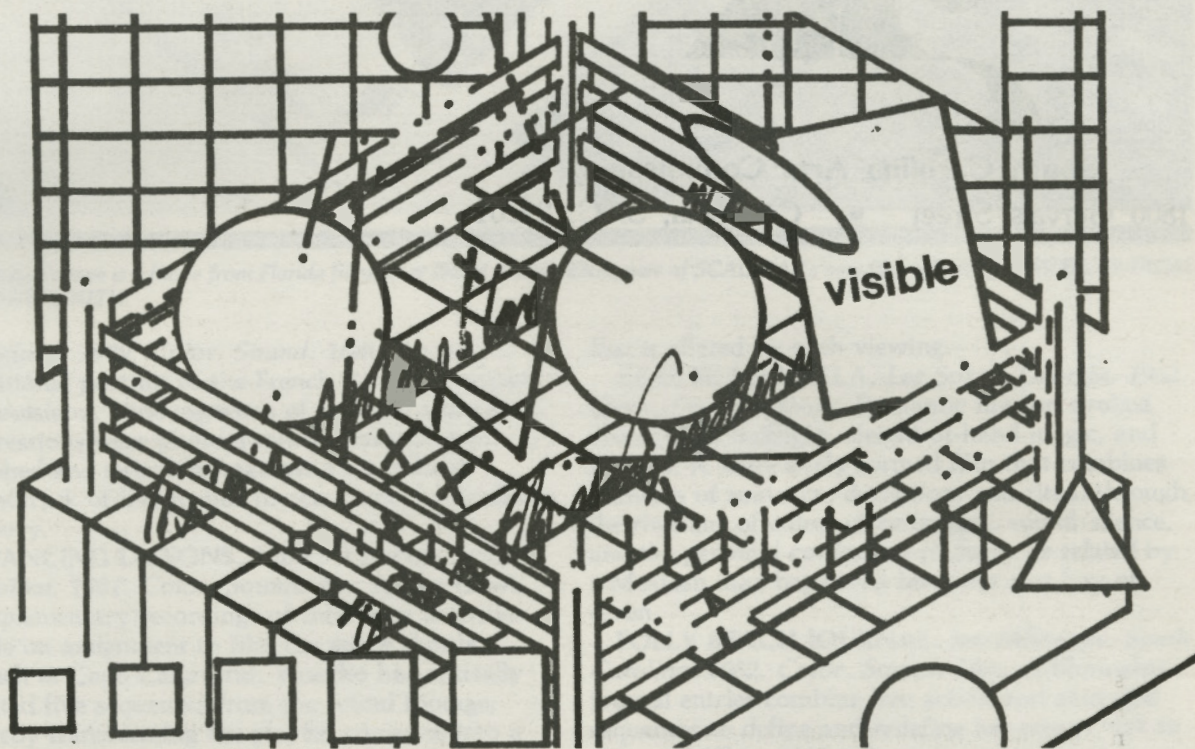
American animators like Glabicki have combined formalism with personal expression. We can include in this group Robert Breer with his plethora of personal jokes, often expressed formally, and George Griffin with his "formalism with values" approach, often expressed through the "square man" he has adopted as his own personal symbol.

Breer's jokes, Griffin's squares and Glabicki's triangles go a long way toward humanizing the formal, and make us begin to believe that Paul sin-

cerely can view the world in terms of formal information, and, that given enough time and assistance from the artist, we can understand it as well.

The connection between Paul's life and art is strong. He sees his friends, for instance, as squares, circles and the like.

"I've known people who were ellipses," he says. "They're cyclical and they're not quite totally symmetrical...but they always come around again."



A drawing from Paul Glabicki's *DIAGRAM FILM*. Much of the film's scenes comment on finding and expressing the formal patterns inherent in all objects and situations.

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